

**Bernard P. Carvalho, Jr.**  
Mayor



**Elton S. Ushio**  
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**LATE**

February 14, 2017

The Honorable Senator Clarence K. Nishihara, Chair, Senator Glenn Wakai, Vice Chair and Members, Committee on Public Safety, Intergovernmental and Military Affairs

State Senate  
415 South Beretania Street  
Honolulu, Hawai'i 96813

**SUBJECT: TESTIMONY ON S.B. 655 RELATING TO MEDIA ACCESS**

Chair Nishihara, Vice Chair Wakai and Committee Members:

I am Elton Ushio, Administrator of the Kaua'i Emergency Management Agency (KEMA), testifying in OPPOSITION of S.B. 655.

KEMA opposes S.B.655, which proposes to amend H.R.S. §127A-12 by adding language pertaining to media access.

We have the following concerns:

1. Allowing media access to restricted areas (stricken, dangerous or under dangerous conditions) poses risks to the media, along with emergency management staff and first responders who may need to assist or render aid.
2. A "duly authorized representative of any news service, newspaper, radio station, television station, or online distribution network" needs to be better-defined. A universally-accepted media definition, an associated credentialing mechanism and a requirement for such credentialing is needed. Otherwise, this could result in an overwhelming number of requests for media access, with no standard for validation.

Here, I'd suggest that the legislature consider a nationwide best-practices study relating to media access and credentialing, and possibly integrate the findings into future proposed legislation.

3. Managing media access can adversely affect emergency management operations and pose a risk to the general public. Given our limited staffing resources, managing media access would compete with, distract from and/or disrupt emergency operations by creating additional burdens.

These items would not be in the best interest of emergency management, our first responder and emergency response partners, as well as the people we serve.

We feel that our established Public Information Officer (PIO) functions, frequent press-releases augmented with social media and website dissemination, along with our practices of reasonable media access at the discretion of emergency management and/or public safety officials more than adequately address media needs.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Elton S. Ushio', with a large, stylized flourish extending to the right.

Elton S. Ushio  
Emergency Management Administrator